

In the Claims

1. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) An InterWorking Unit (IWU) for interfacing a plurality of client devices to a MultiProtocol Label Switching (MPLS) network, the IWU comprising:

a plurality of IWU edge nodes adapted for exchanging MPLS frames with the plurality of client devices;

an IWU switch node communicating with the plurality of IWU edge nodes and adapted for exchanging the MPLS frames with the MPLS network, with the IWU switch node being configured to receive a MPLS frame from the MPLS network, with the MPLS frame including an inner label and an outer MPLS label, process the outer MPLS label in order to determine one designated IWU edge node of the plurality of IWU edge nodes, with the one designated IWU edge node being designated by the outer MPLS label, and transfer the MPLS frame to only the one designated IWU edge node; and

the one designated IWU edge node being configured to transfer the data transported in the MPLS frame to a designated client device that is designated by the inner label of the MPLS frame;

the IWU switch node further configured to receive a second MPLS frame from the MPLS network, with the second MPLS frame including an improper inner label and a proper outer MPLS label, and transfer the second MPLS frame to a second designated IWU edge node that is designated by the proper outer MPLS label; and

the second designated IWU edge node configured to not transfer the data transported in the second MPLS frame to a designated client device that is improperly designated by the improper inner label of the second MPLS frame.

2. (ORIGINAL) The IWU of claim 1, wherein the outer MPLS label specifies a unique IWU edge node of the plurality of IWU edge nodes.

3. (ORIGINAL) The IWU of claim 1, with the IWU interpreting the inner label based on the outer MPLS label.

4. (ORIGINAL) The IWU of claim 1, with the IWU switch node being further configured to strip off the outer MPLS label from the MPLS frame before the IWU switch node transfers the MPLS frame to the designated IWU edge node.

5. (CANCELED)

6. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The IWU of claim § 1, wherein the second designated IWU edge node discards the data transported in the second MPLS frame.

7. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The IWU of claim § 1, wherein the second designated IWU edge node generates an alarm condition.

8. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) A method of operating an InterWorking Unit (IWU) for interfacing a plurality of client devices to a MultiProtocol Label Switching (MPLS) network, the method comprising:

an IWU switch node of the IWU receiving a MPLS frame from the MPLS network, with the MPLS frame including an inner label and an outer MPLS label;

the IWU switch node processing the outer MPLS label in order to determine one designated IWU edge node of a plurality of IWU edge nodes, with the one designated IWU edge node being designated by the outer MPLS label;

the IWU switch node transferring the MPLS frame to only the one designated IWU edge node; and

the one designated IWU edge node transferring the data transported in the MPLS frame to a designated client device that is designated by the inner label of the MPLS frame;

the IWU switch node receiving a second MPLS frame from the MPLS network, with the second MPLS frame including an improper inner label and a proper outer MPLS label;

the IWU switch node transferring the second MPLS frame to a second designated IWU edge node that is designated by the proper outer MPLS label; and

the second designated IWU edge node not transferring the data transported in the second MPLS frame to a designated client device that is improperly designated by the improper inner label of the second MPLS frame.

9. (ORIGINAL) The method of claim 8, wherein the outer MPLS label specifies a unique IWU edge node of the plurality of IWU edge nodes.

10. (ORIGINAL) The method of claim 8, with the IWU interpreting the inner label based on the outer MPLS label.

11. (ORIGINAL) The method of claim 8, with the IWU switch node being further configured to strip off the outer MPLS label from the MPLS frame before the IWU switch node transfers the data transported in the MPLS frame to the designated IWU edge node.

12. (CANCELED)

13. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The method of claim ~~42~~ 8, wherein the second designated IWU edge node discards the second MPLS frame.

14. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The method of claim ~~42~~ 8, wherein the second designated IWU edge node generates an alarm condition.

15. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) A computer readable medium encoded with computer executable instructions for an InterWorking Unit (IWU) for interfacing a plurality of client devices to a MultiProtocol Label Switching (MPLS) network, with the IWU comprising an IWU switch node adapted for exchanging MPLS frames with the MPLS network and a plurality of IWU edge nodes in communication with the IWU switch node and adapted for exchanging the MPLS frames with the plurality of client devices, wherein:

the computer executable instructions direct the IWU switch node to receive a MPLS frame from the MPLS network, with the MPLS frame including an inner label and an outer MPLS label, direct the IWU switch node to process the outer MPLS label in order to determine one designated IWU edge node of the plurality of IWU edge nodes, with the one designated IWU edge node being designated by the outer MPLS label, direct the IWU switch node to transfer the MPLS frame to only the one designated IWU edge node, and direct the one designated IWU edge node to transfer the data transported in the MPLS frame to a designated client device that is designated by the inner label of the MPLS frame; and

the computer executable instructions further direct the IWU switch node to receive a second MPLS frame from the MPLS network, with the second MPLS frame including an improper inner label and a proper outer MPLS label, transfer the second MPLS frame to a second designated IWU edge node that is designated by the proper outer MPLS label, and direct the second designated IWU edge node to not transfer the data transported in the second MPLS frame to a designated client device that is improperly designated by the improper inner label of the second MPLS frame.

16. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The computer readable medium of claim 15, wherein the outer MPLS label specifies a unique IWU edge node of the plurality of IWU edge nodes.

17. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The computer readable medium of claim 15, with the IWU interpreting the inner label based on the outer MPLS label.

18. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The computer readable medium of claim 15, wherein the computer executable instructions direct the IWU switch node to strip off the outer MPLS label from the MPLS frame before the IWU switch node transfers the MPLS frame to the designated IWU edge node.

19. (CANCELED)

20. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The computer readable medium of claim ~~19~~ 15, wherein the computer executable instructions direct the second designated IWU edge node to discard the second MPLS frame.

21. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The computer readable medium of claim ~~19~~ 15, wherein the computer executable instructions direct the second designated IWU edge node to generate an alarm condition.